

beauty of design and the loveliness of fair colour,
 and the tedious realism of those who merely ^{rejecting} paint
 what they ^{see}, try to see something worth seeing, and to see it
 not with actual and physical vision., but with that
 nobler ^{vision} of the soul which is as far wider in spiritual scope as
 it is far more splendid in artistic purpose. They, at any rate,
 work under those decorative conditions that each art requires
 for its perfection, and have sufficient aesthetic instinct to
 regret those sordid and stupid limitations of absolute
 modernity of form which have proved the ruin of so many of the
 Impressionists.
 Still; the art that is frankly decorative is the art
 to live with. It is, of all our visible arts, the one art that
 creates in us both mood and temperament. Mere colour, unspoiled
 by meaning, and unallied with definite form, can speak to the
 soul in a thousand different ways. The harmony that
 resides in the delicate proportions of lines and masses becomes
 mirrored in the mind. The repetitions of pattern give us
 rest. The marvels of design stir the imagination. In the
 mere loveliness of the materials employed there are latent
 elements of culture. Nor is this all. By its deliberate rejection of
 Nature as the ideal of beauty, as well as of the imitative
 method of the ordinary painter, decorative art not merely
 prepares the soul for the reception of true imaginative work, but
 develops in it that sense of form which is the basis of creative no
 less than of critical achievement. For the real artist is he
 who proceeds, not from feeling to form, but from form to thought
 and passion. He does not first conceive an idea, and then say
 to himself, "I will put my idea into a complex metre of
 fourteen lines," but, realizing the beauty of the sonnet-scheme, he
 conceives certain modes of music and methods of rhyme,
 and the mere form suggests what is to fill it and make it
 intellectually and emotionally complete. From time to time the
 world cries out against some charming artistic poet, because, to
 use its hackneyed and silly phrase, he has "nothing to say." But if he
 had something to say, he would probably say it, and the
 result would be tedious. It is just because he has no new
 message, that he can do beautiful work. He gains his inspiration
 from form, and from form purely, as an artist should. A
 real passion would ruin him. Whatever actually occurs is
 spoiled for art. All bad poetry springs from genuine feeling. To
 be natural is to be obvious, and to be obvious is to be
 inartistic.

Ernest. I wonder do you really believe what

you say?
Gilbert. Why should you wonder? It is not
merely in art